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The President's Daily Brief

October 27, 1975

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~~Top Secret~~ 25X1

Exempt from general
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652
exemption category 5B(1)(2)(3)
declassified only on approval of
the Director of Central Intelligence

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

October 27, 1975

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SYRIA-ISRAEL

Syria has continued to take military measures that could indicate it intends to initiate some type of hostility shortly with Israel.

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Syrian forces are on alert-- the ground forces were placed on full alert while the air and air defense forces are on a somewhat lower level of readiness. All Syrian military personnel have been re-called from leave.

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Syria's 7th Infantry Division has been reinforced near Qatana with nearly a battalion of artillery. In addition, military vehicles of front-line Syrian units have been dispersed into revetments, and Syrian soldiers at the front are now wearing steel helmets and carrying arms. Syria has activated the forward command posts of at least two of its three infantry divisions at the front, and is moving artillery ammunition forward.

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Syrian commanders were ordered to start dispersing their units and to begin construction of fortifications, trenches, and tank positions. Syrian troops have been placed in a higher state of readiness.

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Syrian artillery battalions had been supplied with illumination shells, which Syrian officers interpreted as the beginning of preparations for night fighting.

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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Damascus [REDACTED] could initiate military action at any time. Syria's forces are deployed close to the front and Israel would have little warning if Damascus decided to resume fighting. This warning time has been further reduced by the Syrians' recent military realignments. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
the Syrians are planning some offensive action on or about October 30.

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Meanwhile, Israel may have taken some limited military precautions to meet any Syrian threat.

[REDACTED] seeing a larger than usual number of troops and reservists returning to military units in northern Israel yesterday. He reported, however, that activity at Israeli military camps appeared normal.

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LEBANON

The heavy fighting, which broke out in Beirut on Friday night, continued over the weekend and spread to normally quiet areas near the city's foreign residential section. A few stray bullets hit the US embassy, and mortar fire damaged Austrian embassy facilities reportedly wounding the ambassador.

A cease-fire is said to have been agreed to by the feuding left and right-wing factions following an appeal after an emergency session of the Lebanese cabinet yesterday. The cease-fire seems to be taking hold slowly, however, and is not likely to last much longer than previous ones. The fighting appears to be limited mostly to Beirut, with other areas of the country remaining relatively calm.

The Lebanese army remains out of the fray. It continues to guard a few key government installations and to man roadblocks at major entrance points into the city.

Ambassador Godley reports the increasingly grim situation in the city is causing more apprehension in the foreign community. The British already have recommended the voluntary evacuation of nonessential personnel, and Ambassador Godley is contemplating similar action today unless the situation improves. He intends to expedite the departure of US regional personnel whose offices already are being relocated. The director of UN activities in Beirut on Saturday ordered all UN offices closed until further notice.

Syrian officials, meanwhile, claim that approximately 200,000 Lebanese have fled to Syria in recent days to escape the fighting. They also say Damascus is sending food to Lebanon and has sent fire fighting brigades to Beirut.

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There is still no information on the whereabouts of the two kidnaped US officials and some confusion about who is holding them. Yesterday, the deputy head of the leftist Popular Socialist Party in Lebanon told our embassy they were being held by a Lebanese--not Palestinian--organization. Earlier reports indicated that the two men were in the hands of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

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PORTUGAL

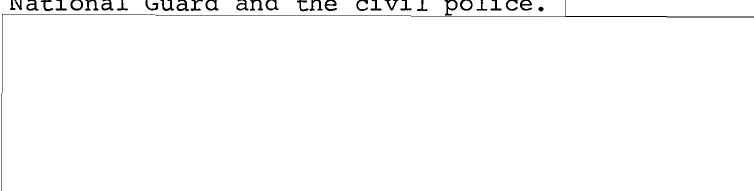
The government appears to have emerged from the events of the past few days with its authority somewhat strengthened, in spite of a series of terrorist bombings and a spate of coup rumors.

On his arrival Saturday in Porto, where he went to shore up the regional military commander in the face of leftist attacks, Prime Minister Azevedo said that authority and discipline would be reinstated in Portugal "at any price." Azevedo's words, as well as his trip to Porto, signaled his strong support for the northern commander's efforts to restore military discipline there. Such efforts were undermined earlier this month by Army Chief of Staff Fabiao when he acquiesced to the demands of rebellious soldiers.

In a further positive move, the government on Friday announced new commanders for the Republican National Guard and the civil police.

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The Prime Minister said his visit to Porto was the first in a series to various parts of the country, which presumably he will use to mobilize popular support for his government. Although the Communists urged their supporters not to attend Azevedo's rally, his appearance in Porto drew 150,000 people. This number contrasts sharply with the anti-government demonstration last week in Lisbon which drew only about 13,000.

The military alert announced on Friday ended abruptly on Saturday with the explanation that the country is now calm. Whatever the reason for the alert--it may have been politically motivated--it appears to have been skillfully used by the government to at least temporarily seize the initiative and marshal its forces.

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EGYPT-USSR

The USSR has issued its strongest attack to date on Egyptian policies and the second Sinai disengagement agreement on the eve of President Sadat's arrival here.

In an article in Pravda on Saturday, which indicated top level Kremlin endorsement, the Soviets bitterly rebutted Sadat's allegations of less than wholehearted Soviet diplomatic and military support. The article seems to be designed to present Moscow's case on assistance and to discredit Sadat's arguments for dealing with the US. It particularly disparaged Egyptian criticism of Soviet military aid, and reminded the Egyptians that experience with the West in the early 1950s should have demonstrated to them that they cannot expect "imperialist states to show concern for building up Egypt's military strength."

Despite its scathing tone, the article did not attack Sadat by name and kept the door open for better Soviet-Egyptian ties. Pravda, however, clearly put the onus for improving relations on Egypt, saying that cooperation cannot develop if one party follows policies that undermine it.

The article also contains Moscow's most authoritative exposition of its opposition to the second Sinai agreement. It particularly chastises the provision for US observers in the Sinai, describing it as being "fraught with far-reaching, dangerous consequences." The article reiterated the utility of the Geneva conference as the forum for the resolution of the conflict, but did not reject further partial steps toward a settlement under the Geneva umbrella.

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The
net impression left by [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the Pravda article is that Moscow does not close
out any practical options for the next step in Mid-
dle East diplomacy as long as they include Soviet
participation.

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SPAIN

The death watch over General Franco continues in Madrid. A medical bulletin issued this morning said he is now suffering from stomach bleeding and congestive cardiac insufficiency.

The government appears to be holding off on taking any action to declare Franco incapacitated because his imminent death makes the action unnecessary. Plans for swearing in Prince Juan Carlos are being made.

The immediate transition period is expected to be calm. Various important illegal opposition leaders have told our embassy that they are willing to give the Prince a chance to move Spain toward democracy. [redacted] even the Communist Party is voicing a similar opinion. The Basques also are expected to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, but the radical, dissident communist, Patriotic, Anti-Fascist Revolutionary Front probably will initiate further terrorist activities.

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NOTES

The Soviets are continuing to take some fairly sharp propaganda shots at the Chinese, but their [redacted] commentaries on the relationship suggest stalemate rather than alarm.

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A recent Pravda article accused the Chinese of escalating their anti-Soviet campaign, but attributed this hostility to Mao's frustration over the failure of his domestic and foreign policies. Moscow's handling of Secretary Kissinger's visit to Peking suggests that the Soviets are not as concerned as they once were about China's ability to use relations with the US against the USSR. For the first time, Soviet propaganda has contrasted China's opposition to detente-related developments with the position taken by the Secretary. Moscow especially noted Sino-US differences in assessing the results of the recently concluded European Security Conference.

* * *

The Indonesian military operation launched [redacted] in Portuguese Timor has bogged down.

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Field commanders apparently underestimated their logistical problems and the strength of Fretilin forces operating near the border. Jakarta remains determined, nevertheless, to escalate its operations inside Portuguese Timor [redacted]

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[redacted] Indonesia wants to establish a number of small military enclaves in the Portuguese half of the island from which it can attack Fretilin forces. Three such enclaves already have been set up, and Jakarta hopes to establish two more by the end of the week.

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